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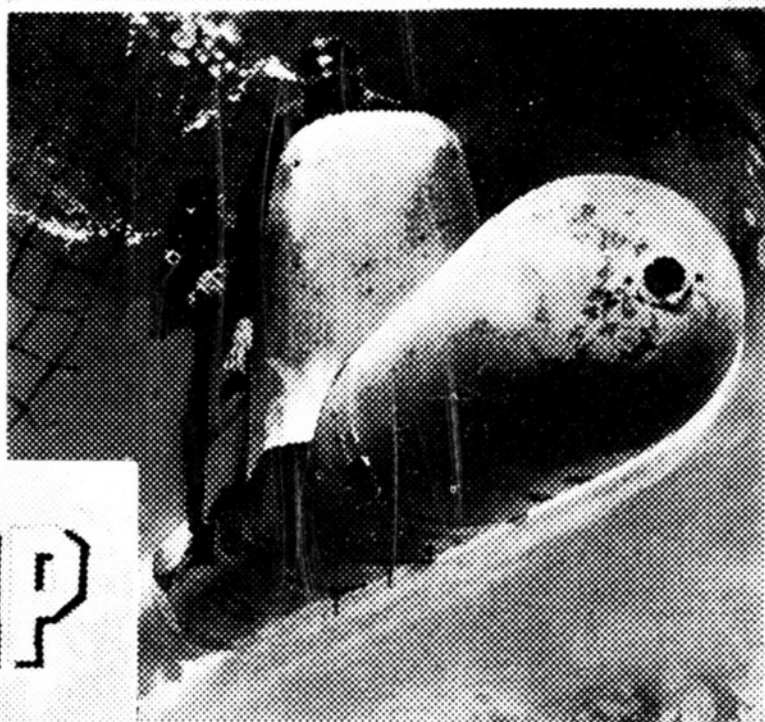
MASSACRE MOUNTAIN



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To Strike Unseen



Q-SHIP



No. 17 TO STRIKE UNSEEN

They penetrated deep into enemy waters astride an explosive-packed torpedo—on a one-way ticket to danger!

No. 18 Q-SHIP

She was a killer-ship, masquerading as an innocent merchantman on Britain's lifeline from the Free World.

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Massacre Mountain

ON THE ORDNANCE MAPS IN ITALY IN 1944 IT WAS HILL 125. TO THE MEN WHO FOUGHT OVER IT, IT GAINED A MORE FITTING AND MORE SINISTER NAME, FOR THEY CALLED IT... MASSACRE MOUNTAIN!

HEY, YOU!
CLAP YOUR
TIN HAT ON
YOUR DIM-
WITTED DOME!
WHAT D'YOU
THINK YOU
ARE... BOMB
PROOF?



Chapter 1. *Advance—and Destroy!*



CAPTAIN MEADOWS GAVE A STARTLED CRY AND DROPPED TO ONE KNEE ...



Massacre Mountain

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TOM BELL, SERGEANT OF 16 PLATOON, WAS QUICK TO TAKE UP THE CRY AS HE GLARED AT THE HAPPY-GO-LUCKY BUZZ RILEY, THE BLIGHT OF HIS EXISTENCE ...

**HIT THE DIRT!
MOVE, RILEY...
MOVE!**



BELL HAD A VOICE LOUDER THAN A TRUMPET BLAST... LOUDER, IN FACT, THAN THE CRESCENDO-SCREAM OF A CASCADE OF STEEL THAT NOW LASHED DOWN ...

TO BE SHELLLED ON THE START-LINE ... AN INFANTRY COMMANDER'S NIGHTMARE. BUT IT WOULD TAKE A SIGHT MORE THAN THAT TO DESTROY MY LADS' MORALE.



Massacre Mountain

THE SHELLS WERE 88-MILLIMETRE. GROUND AND AIR SHUDDERED TO THEIR BLUDGEONING CONCUSSIONS.

RILEY, YESTERDAY I ORDERED YOU TO CLEAN YOUR BOOTS. I SEE YOU AIN'T DONE IT. IF YOU COME THROUGH THIS ALIVE, REMIND ME TO PUT YOU ON A FIZZER.

STONE THE CROWS! HARK AT HIM!



THE TUMULTUOUS ECHOES OF THE GERMAN SALVO DIED AWAY. THEN MAJOR BILL CALLED OUT, COOL AS EVER ...

ALL RIGHT, BOYS...IT'S H-HOUR! TIME WE WERE ON OUR WAY. REMEMBER, IT'S MONTE OZARIA OR BUST.



Massacre Mountain

5

'DON' COMPANY MOVED FORWARD IN OPEN ORDER, BETWEEN SCATTERED CRATERS AND DRIFTS OF CORDITE FUMES ...

WHAT DID THE MAJOR CALL IT, SARGE? MONTE OZ SOMETHING OR OTHER?

HILL ONE - TWO-FIVE TO YOU, RILEY!



ANOTHER FLIGHT OF EIGHTY-EIGHTS SMASHED IN. THROUGH THE CLAMOUR OF THE DETONATIONS, A VOICE ROSE IN SONG.

WE'RE OFF TO SEE
THE WIZARD,
THE WONDERFUL
WIZARD OF OZ.
IF EVER A WIZ OF A
WIZ THERE WAS...



Massacre Mountain

BUZZ RILEY'S VOICE WAS ABOUT AS TUNEFUL AS A HACK-SAW... BUT A HUNDRED OTHER VOICES TOOK UP THE REFRAIN AND STEPPED OUT TO IT IN LIVELY TEMPO...



AND SO THE NEW ZEALANDERS PRESSED ON UNSWERVINGLY, A SONG ON THEIR LIPS, IN JAUNTY DISREGARD OF IMMINENT DEATH. NO WONDER BRADDOCK'S PULSE THUMPED WITH PRIDE.



Massacre Mountain

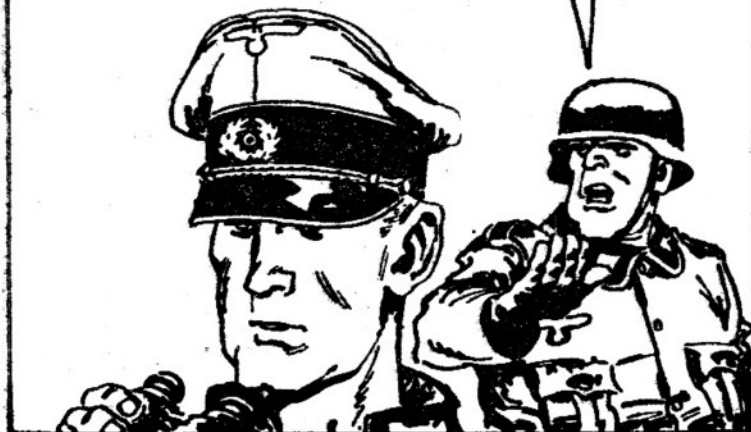
THE GERMANS ON THE RIDGE **COULD** HEAR THEM, FAINTLY, THROUGH THE DRUMMING OF THE GUNS THAT WERE USHERING IN THE DAWN ...



UP THERE, A COMPANY OF THE FIRST BATTALION OF THE 103 JÄGER REGIMENT WAS DUG-IN... HAUPTMANN MAX LANGSDORF WAS IN COMMAND...

MOST OF THE EIGHTY-EIGHTS ARE OVERSHOOTING, OBERLEUTNANT KLAUSTEN. GO TELL THE FORWARD OBSERVATION OFFICER TO WAKE UP HIS IDEAS.

AS YOU COMMAND, HERR HAUPTMANN. HEIL HITLER!



MAX LANGSDORF GRIMACED AND DID NOT RETURN THE OBERLEUTNANT'S RIGIDLY PUNCTILIOUS SALUTE...

I WISH KLAUSTEN WOULD FORGET ONCE IN A WHILE THAT HE'S A NAZI FIRST AND A GERMAN AFTERWARDS. I **WOULD** HAVE TO BE SADDLED WITH SOMEONE LIKE HIM FOR A SECOND-IN-COMMAND!



Massacre Mountain

AS KLAUSTEN HASTENED TOWARDS A SHELTER OCCUPIED BY THE ARTILLERY'S F.O.O., THERE CAME A NOISE LIKE AN EXPRESS-TRAIN... AND A SHATTERING EXPLOSION...



THAT FIRST BIG SHELL WAS THE THUNDERING PRELUDE TO A 15-MINUTE BOMBARDMENT WHICH CLAWED AND RIPPED AT THE SLOPE OF THE RIDGE WITH TALONS OF FLAME...



Massacre Mountain

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KLAUSTEN SCUTTLED BACK AND REPORTED TO LANGSDORF. TOGETHER, THEY MOVED TOWARDS THE COMPANY COMMAND-POST...



MEANWHILE, THE MEN OF 'DON' COMPANY OF THE KIWIS BATTALION HAD REACHED THE BASE OF THE SLOPE. THEY STARTED THE ASCENT AS THE BRITISH BARRAGE DIED OUT...



Massacre Mountain

BELL SNORTED LIKE THE OLD WAR-HORSE HE WAS...



THE GERMAN GUNS SUDDENLY CEASED FIRE, TOO. THERE WAS A STRANGE SILENCE, EERIE WITH PREMONITION. IT DID NOT LAST LONG!



Massacre Mountain

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THE GERMANS HAD TAKEN A POUNDING, YET THEY WERE OLD CAMPAIGNERS AND IN AN INSTANT, THEIR FRONT BECAME BARBED WITH FLAME!

SPEED UP ON THE RIGHT THERE, SIXTEEN PLATOON! SERGEANT BELL, DON'T LET YOUR MEN BUNCH UP!



SIXTEEN PLATOON WAS WITHOUT ITS SUBALTERN AND BELL WAS ITS ACTING COMMANDER. HIS VOICE BLARED OUT ...

YOU HEARD THE MAJOR! SPEED UP, SPEED UP! AND SPREAD OUT, YOU SHOWER OF IDLE BANDYCOOTS!



Massacre Mountain

THERE WERE SOME WHO WOULD HARDLY TURN A HAIR UNDER THE LASH OF BULLETS, BUT WHO CRINGED AT THE BLISTERING SCOURGE OF BELL'S TONGUE!

NO KIDDING, BUZZ...
WHEN THE SARGE LETS
GO, HE FAIR BATTERS
A BLOKE'S NERVOUS
SYSTEM!

TOO RIGHT, HE
DOES! IF HE'D ONLY
SHOUT AT THE
JERRIES THE SAME
WAY, THEY'D COME
OUT WITH THEIR
HANDS UP.



IT WAS AGAINST THE KIWIS' CENTRE
THAT THE GERMANS DIRECTED THE
MAIN FORCE OF THEIR FIRE-POWER...

MAJOR, YOU'RE
HURT!

IT'S NOTHING,
MEADOWS.
JUST A
SCRATCH.



BILL BRADDOCK AND MEADOWS SURVIVED, BUT 17 PLATOON IN THE COMPANY'S CENTRE WITHERED AWAY. THE MAJOR TURNED TO HIS SECOND-IN-COMMAND ...



AS THE TWO OFFICERS SEPARATED, A SPANDAU-GUNNER TRIED TO FIX ON BILL. A LINE OF TRACER RIPPED A FURROW CLOSE TO HIM.

I NEVER WANTED TO COMMIT MY WHOLE COMPANY IN EXTENDED LINE, BUT THE COLONEL INSISTED. NOW WE'LL HAVE TO SALVAGE WHAT WE CAN FROM THE SITUATION!



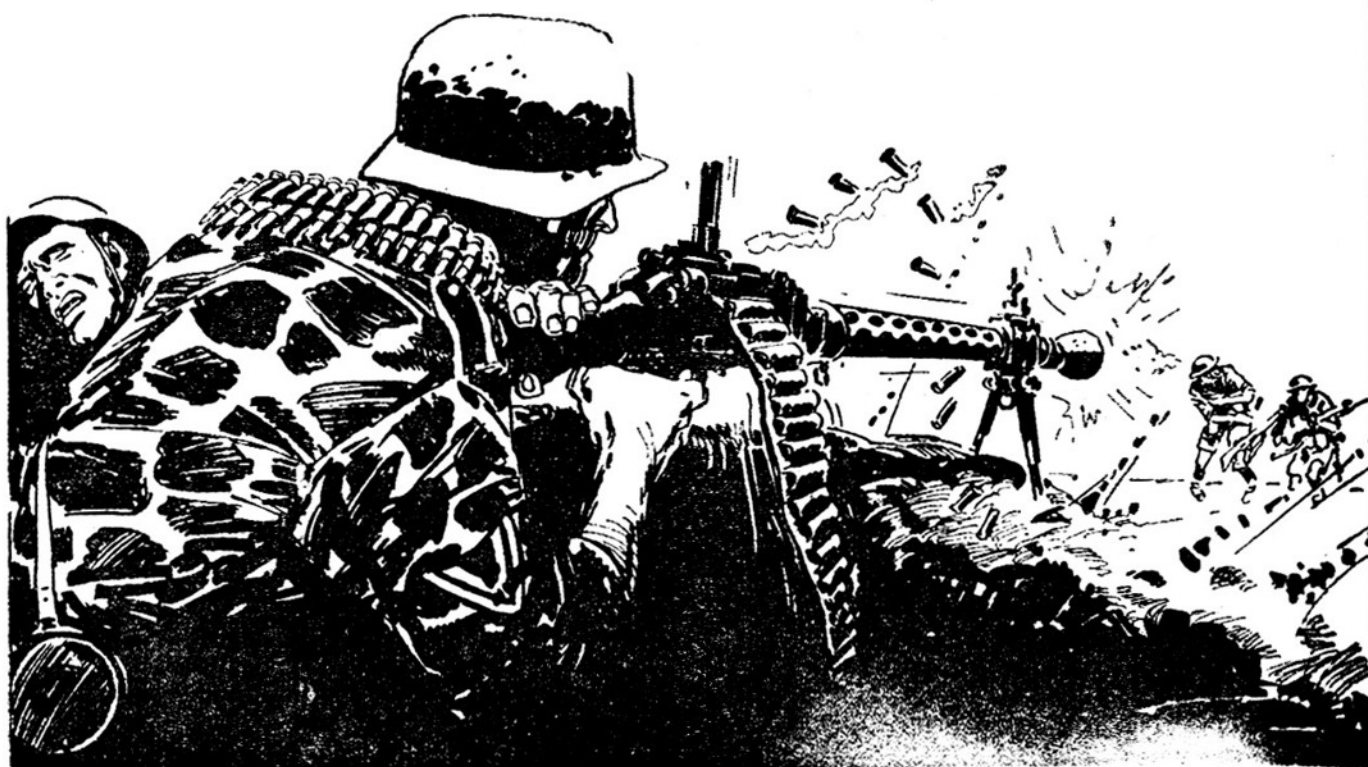
Massacre Mountain

UNSCATHED, EXCEPT FOR THE GRAZE ON HIS BRONZED NECK, HE JOINED UP WITH TOM BELL ...

COVERING-FIRE
FROM YOUR BREN-
GUNNERS... COLD
STEEL FROM YOUR
RIFLEMEN. WE'LL
HIT THE JERRIES'
LEFT WING FOR
SIX!



FROM THEIR WEAPON PITS, THE GERMANS RAKED THE ATTACKERS WITH DEADLY EFFECT.



ONE DETERMINED NAZI MACHINE-GUNNER WAS PINNING DOWN THE KIWI ASSAULT AND BILL BRADDOCK KNEW THEY MUST MOVE ON ... OR FAIL.



THE SURVIVING GERMAN MACHINE-GUNNER SAW THE GRENADE SOAR ALOFT AND HASTILY JUDGED ITS ACCURACY.



Massacre Mountain

IT WAS A DEAD-TO-RIGHTS THROW! THE GRENADE DROPPED PLUMB INTO THE ENEMY WEAPON-PIT...BURST WITH A BLINDING FLASH AND AN EAR-JOLTING CRACK...



THE BLAST DISMEMBERED THE SPANDAU. ITS BARREL WHIRLED TOWARDS LANGSDORF AND RAPPED HIM A STUNNING BLOW ACROSS THE HEAD.



THE NAZI GUNNER WHO HAD PEELED OUT OF THE WEAPON-PIT WAS A HUSKY CHARACTER. HE GATHERED THE HAUPTMANN IN HIS POWERFUL ARMS AND HOISTED HIM OVER ONE SHOULDER...



LANGSDORF WAS BORNE UP THE HILL... AWAY FROM THE TURMOIL OF A HAND-TO-HAND MELEE THAT DEVELOPED... BACK TO HIS COMMAND-POST.



Massacre Mountain

IN FACT, THE NAZIS' LEFT FLANK WAS BEING OVERRUN...
DESPITE FIERCE RESISTANCE BY THE DEFENDERS...



IF LANGSDORF HAD STILL BEEN CONSCIOUS, THE GERMANS WOULD HAVE
HIT BACK WITHOUT DELAY. BUT KLAUSTEN WAS IN CONTROL AND ALTHOUGH
NO COWARD, HE LACKED EXPERIENCE.



SUDDEN DOUBTS ASSAILED KLAUSTEN'S MIND. HOW WOULD HIS DECISION AFFECT HIS NAZI RECORD? WHAT WOULD LANGSDORF DO?

STAND AND RISK
DEFEAT...OR WITHDRAW
AND FIGHT AGAIN?
I DARE NOT CHANCE
THE FIRST...WE MUST
WITHDRAW.



THE DECISION WAS TAKEN.
THE NAZIS PULLED OUT,
THREADING THEIR WAY
PAST THE MOUTHS OF
CAVES THAT HONEYCOMBED
HILL 125'S NORTH FACE ...

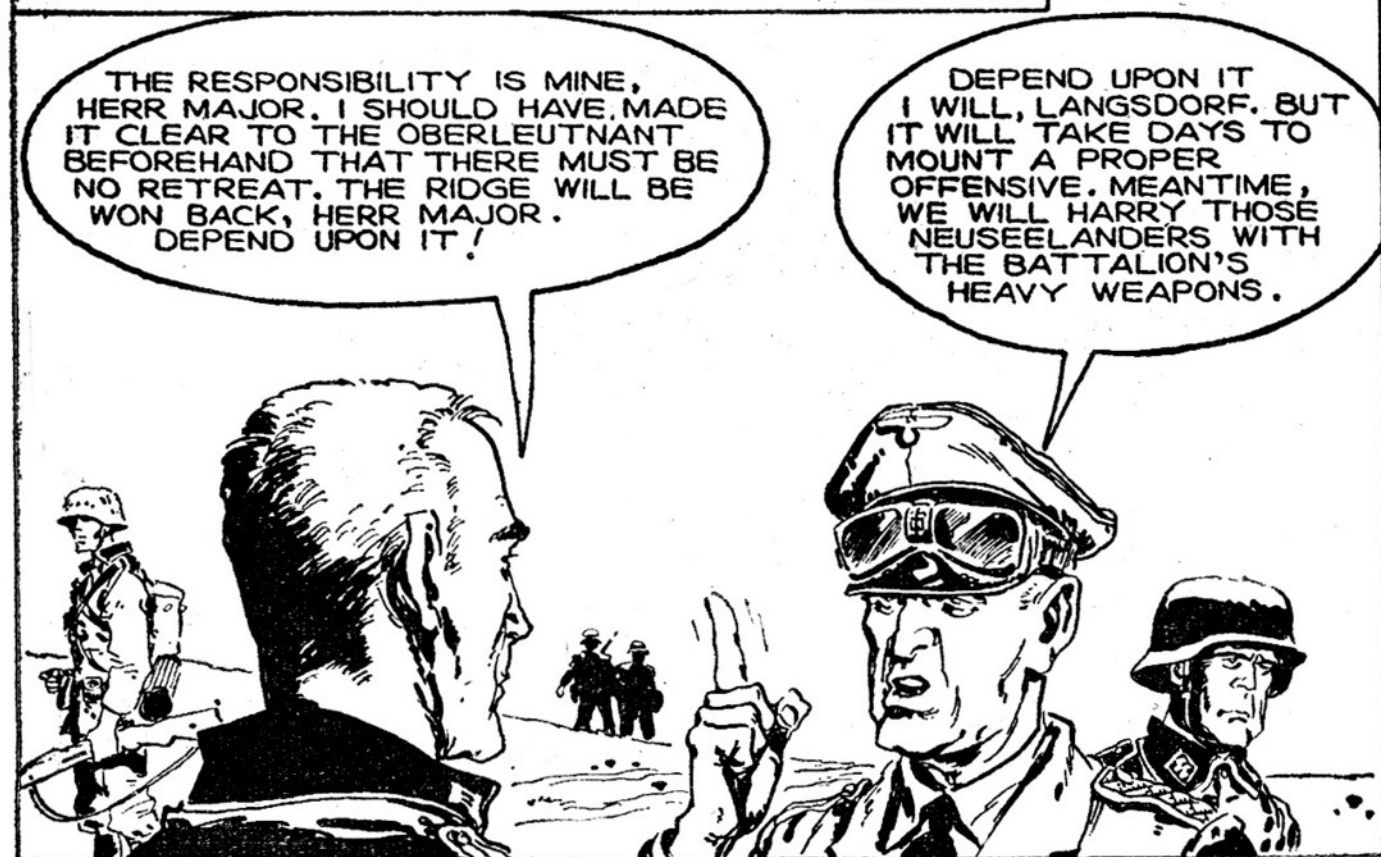


Massacre Mountain

LANGSDORF REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS SHORTLY AFTER. HE HAD ONLY JUST GRASPED THE SITUATION, WHEN KLAUSTEN WAS CONFRONTED BY AN IRATE MAJOR, THEIR BATTALION COMMANDER.



THE HAUPTMANN INTERVENED, MAKING EXCUSES FOR KLAUSTEN AND MANAGED TO TAKE THE HEAT OFF HIM.



SOON THE CREST OF HILL 125 WAS A RAGING INFERNO AS MORTAR-BOMBS SEARED THE GROUND WITH THEIR VICIOUS EXPLOSIONS.



SHELLS FROM GERMAN CLOSE-SUPPORT GUNS SLAMMED INTO THE RIDGE-TOP, TOO... GEYSERING FLAME AND DEBRIS ...



Massacre Mountain

BILL BRADDOCK SETTLED FOR THE POSITIONS HE AND HIS MEN HAD WON FROM THE ENEMY...

ALL RIGHT, LADS. STAY PUT AND WATCH YOUR FRONT. IF ANY COAL-SCUTTLE HELMETS COME OVER THAT SUMMIT, BLAST 'EM FULL OF DAYLIGHT!

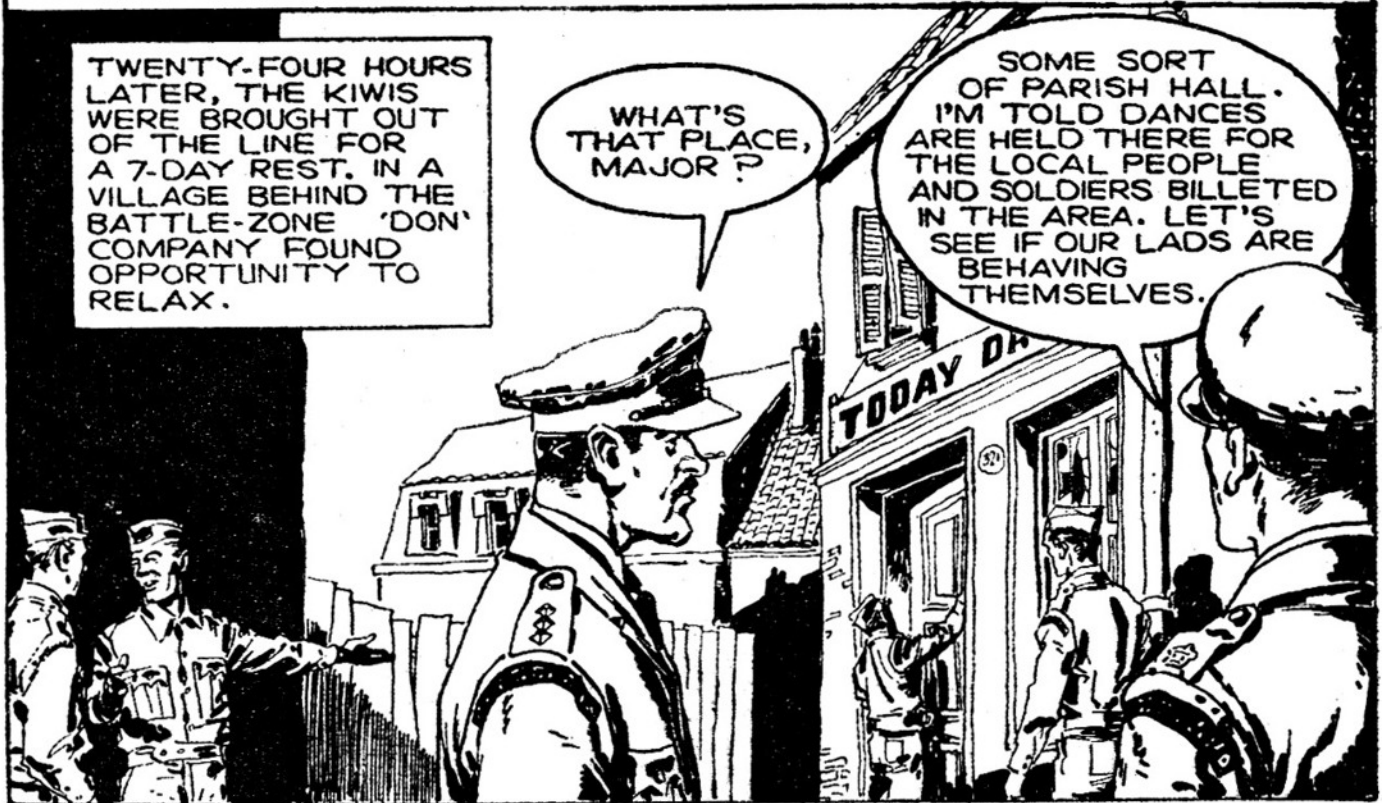


THE KIWIS WATCHED THEIR FRONT. JUST FOR A MOMENT, THOUGH, TOM BELL LOOKED DOWN OVER THE GROUND THEY HAD COVERED IN THE ASSAULT. MANY, LIKE BUZZ RILEY FOR EXAMPLE, WOULD HAVE FOUND IT HARD TO BELIEVE... BUT THERE WAS A HEART UNDER THE HORNY HIDE OF THAT BIG, BULL-VOICED SERGEANT.

'OLD COMRADES'... THAT'S THE NAME OF OUR REGIMENTAL MARCH... AND DOWN THERE LIE OLD COMRADES OF MINE WHO WON'T EVER MARCH AGAIN. GOOD LADS, THEY WERE... ALL OF 'EM. THEY JOIN A LOT MORE I'VE KNOWN... BURIED NOW IN NORTH AFRICA... IN SICILY... FROM THE TOE OF ITALY TO MONTE OZARIA... WHEREVER WE'VE FOUGHT...



Chapter 2. *Repeat Performance*



AT THAT MOMENT, BUZZ RILEY WAS WATCHING WITH A GRIN AS THE HEFTY SERGEANT BELL STUMBLED THROUGH SOME INTRICATE STEPS WITH MORE SPIRIT THAN ELEGANCE.



Massacre Mountain

BUT BILL BRADDOCK AND MEADOWS DID AND WERE GRINNING IN THE DOORWAY WHEN COMPANY-SERGEANT-MAJOR CONNOR APPEARED BEHIND THEM...

WHAT IS IT, SERGEANT MAJOR?

SIGNAL FROM BATTALION H.Q., SIR. WE'RE TO PACK UP AND MOVE OUT. THE JERRIES HAVE PUT IN AN OFFENSIVE AND MADE IMPORTANT GAINS.



INCIDENTALLY, SIR, I HEAR THERE'S A PROPER FLARE-UP GOING ON ROUND THE SPOT THE COMPANY TOOK WHILE I WAS ON THE SICK-LIST. HILL ONE-TWO-FIVE, WASN'T IT?

YES, HILL ONE-TWO-FIVE.



IT WAS CALLED SOMETHING ELSE BY A BADLY-MAULED SUB-UNIT FROM WHICH MAJOR BRADDOCK'S COMPANY TOOK OVER NEXT MORNING...



LAST NIGHT WE WERE UP THERE, AND A HUNDRED STRONG. LOOK WHAT'S LEFT OF US... ONE OFFICER AND TEN OTHER RANKS. NO WONDER THE MEN HAVE CHRISTENED IT **MASSACRE MOUNTAIN!**

IT WAS GALLING FOR BRADDOCK TO SEE MONTE OZARIA IN NAZI HANDS AGAIN... THAT HILL WHICH 'DON' COMPANY HAD WON AT THE COST OF SO MUCH BLOOD ...



THE RANK AND FILE OF HIS COMPANY WERE RUMINATING SOURLY ON THE SAME SUBJECT...

SO TONIGHT WE GIVE AN ENCORE. FOR TWO PINS I'D GO 'OVER THE HILL'... AND I DON'T MEAN HILL ONE - TWO - FIVE !

YOU CAN STOW THAT KIND OF GAB, RILEY. WE'RE ALL BRASSED OFF ABOUT THIS. ANY MORE OF THAT TALK AND I'LL TRUSS YOU UP LIKE A CHRISTMAS TURKEY AND KEEP YOU THAT WAY TILL H-HOUR.



Massacre Mountain

AT NIGHTFALL, BILL BRADDOCK HELD AN ORDER-GROUP. IT COMPRISED HIMSELF AND THE ONLY OTHER TWO OFFICERS IN A DEPLETED COMPANY, TOGETHER WITH THE C.S.M. AND TOM BELL ...



H-HOUR WAS 22-00 HOURS. AT 21-55, A DEATHLY STILLNESS REIGNED, EXCEPT ON THE NORTH FACE OF MONTE OZARIA...WHERE HAUPTMANN LANGSDORF WAS SUPERVISING INTENSE ACTIVITY.



LET US HOPE THE ENEMY GIVE US TIME TO SOW THOSE MINES OVER THE SOUTH, EAST AND WEST SLOPES... AND OUR MORTARMEN TIME TO GET THEIR BASE-PLATES AND BARRELS SET UP, HERR HAUPTMANN.



IT WAS THEN THAT THE SCREECHING OF SHELLS BECAME AUDIBLE. AS THE SOUND SWELLED, A DISTANT RUMBLE WAS HEARD...THE RUMBLE OF THE GUNS THAT HAD FIRED THOSE SHELLS.



Massacre Mountain

LANGSDORF AND KLAUSTEN JACKBOOTED FOR THE SOUTH SLOPE -- HAD STILL TO REACH IT WHEN THE INCOMING SHELLS WHOOSHED DOWN!



A MASSIVE SHOCK-WAVE FLUNG THEM HEADLONG, BUT THEY PICKED THEMSELVES UP AND PELTED ON. AT THE COMPANY C.P., LANGSDORF ORDERED KLAUSTEN TO TAKE COVER ...





MAX LANGSDORF DREW CONCLUSIONS FROM THAT PATTERN AS THE BRITISH GUNS BUILT UP A STAGGERING CONCERTO OF DRUMFIRE...



Massacre Mountain

FOR TEN MINUTES THE HILL'S WESTERN SHOULDER WAS SMOTHERED. THEN THE TEMPEST OF HIGH EXPLOSIVE CEASED, TO BE FOLLOWED BY ANOTHER KIND OF BARRAGE ...

SMOKE-SHELLS!
IT WON'T BE LONG
NOW BEFORE
WE'VE A FIGHT
ON OUR HANDS,
COMRADE.

JAWOHL,
RITTER. I TRUST
YOU'RE IN GOOD
FORM WITH THAT
TOY OF YOURS!



LANGSDORF WAS QUICK TO NOTE WHAT WAS HAPPENING ON HIS RIGHT-FRONT NOW ... AND JUST AS QUICK TO REACT...



THE BRITISH SMOKE-SCREEN THICKENED. IT MASKED NOTHING! MEN WERE NOT ADVANCING BENEATH ITS SULPHUROUS CLOAK... BUT ON THE EXPOSED EAST SLOPE ...



Massacre Mountain

BRADDOCK AND HIS MEN STOLE UPWARD. BUT NOW THAT THE GUNFIRE HAD ABATED AND THE NEED WAS FOR STRICT SILENCE, THE MAJOR BECAME AWARE OF A PERSISTENT, NERVE-TESTING SOUND.

SQUEAK, SQUEAK, SQUEAK! WHO THE DEVIL'S RESPONSIBLE FOR THAT NOISE?

IT'S MY BLOOMING BEETLE-BASHERS, SIR... ME BOOTS. THEY WERE OKAY WHEN THEY WERE DIRTY, BUT SARN'T BELL MADE ME CLEAN 'EM.



BIG TOM ALMOST BURST WITH WRATH.

BLAME *ME*, WOULD YOU? WHY, YOU ---

QUIET, SERGEANT! KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN! YOU SHOULD'VE TOLD RILEY TO USE DUBBIN, NOT SPIT AND POLISH!



THE MAJOR ORDERED BUZZ TO THE REAR, THEN CREPT ON...

SORRY I GOT YOU INTO TROUBLE, SARGE... DIDN'T MEAN TO.

YOU GET *ME* INTO TROUBLE? THAT'LL BE THE DAY!



AWAY ABOVE, THERE WAS HURRIED MOVEMENT. FIGURES WERE FLITTING THROUGH THE GLOOM ~ FROM EAST TO WEST...

MAKE HASTE, GEFREITER!
GET YOUR SECTION OVER
TO THE OTHER SIDE OF
THE DEFENSIVE-AREA
AT THE DOUBLE!

JA, HERR
LEUTNANT!



THE KIWIS INCHED STEADILY NEARER TO THEIR GOAL, THE WEAKENED GERMAN LEFT WING. THEY COULD JUST DETECT NAZI HELMETS WHEN A GUTTURAL VOICE SANG OUT...

HERR LEUTNANT,
I THINK I CAN
MAKE OUT SHAPES
DOWN THERE!

SHAPES?
D'YOU MEAN
MEN? HIMMEL,
WE'LL SOON
SEE!



Massacre Mountain

A FLARE-PISTOL SHOT A BALL OF LIGHT ARCHINGLY THROUGH THE DARK. IT BURST WITH A POP~ AND LAID BARE THE EASTERN SLOPE!



THE CRACK AND SPLATTER OF SMALL-ARMS' FIRE BROKE OUT. THE GERMAN LEUTNANT AND HIS MEN PUT UP A DESPERATE FIGHT, BUT THERE WAS NO STOPPING THE KIWIS!



THE NEW ZEALANDERS STEAMROLLED OVER THE GERMAN LEFT WING ...



THEY SWARMED WESTWARD OVER THE HILLSIDE: THE MID-SECTOR OF THE ENEMY DEFENCE-SYSTEM HAD LIKewise BEEN REDUCED IN STRENGTH, AND NOW IT BECAME DISORGANISED ...



Massacre Mountain

KLAUSTEN KNEW LANGSDORF WAS OVER ON THE RIGHT FLANK, WHERE THE ATTACK HAD BEEN EXPECTED. HE DASHED IN THAT DIRECTION ... RAN INTO HIM, ALMOST FULL-TILT ...

IN HEAVEN'S NAME, WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE CENTRE AND ON OUR LEFT FLANK?

HERR HAUPTMANN, OUR LEFT FLANK NO LONGER EXISTS AND OUR CENTRE'S IN DANGER OF BEING OVER-RUN! WE'VE BEEN COMPLETELY FOOLED!



MAX LANGSDORF HAD TO THINK FAST FOR IT WAS A CRITICAL SITUATION. YET HE DID NOT PANIC.

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO, HERR HAUPTMANN?



DO? WE ARE GOING TO FIGHT OR DIE, KLAUSTEN. BUT FIRST, WHAT'S LEFT OF OUR COMPANY MUST BE DRAWN BACK TO THE RIDGE-TOP, OR WE'LL BE SURROUNDED.

WITH SUPERB CALM, THE GERMAN COMMANDER SHEPHERDED HIS MEN UP TO THE CREST OF THE SLOPE FROM THE RIGHT WING ...

KEEP YOUR FACES TOWARDS THE ENEMY! WHEN WE REACH THE CROWN OF THE HILL, SPREAD OUT ALONG IT! **BEYOND THAT THERE WILL BE NO RETREAT!**



HIS MEN GAINED NEW COURAGE FROM HIS STEADFASTNESS AND AS THEY REACHED THE RIDGE-TOP THEY TOOK POST DOGGEDLY, GRIMLY.

CONSERVE YOUR AMMUNITION. FIRE ONLY ON MY ORDERS. THAT APPLIES TO EVERYONE -- INCLUDING YOU, RITTER, AND THE OTHER MACHINE-GUNNERS.



FARTHER DOWN THE SOUTH SLOPE, BRADDOCK AND HIS STALWARTS HAD FINISHED MOPPING UP AMONG THE NAZI FOXHOLES. BUT THE MAJOR KNEW HIS TASK WAS NOT DONE ...

A WHOLE GANG OF THE JOKERS SWARMED UP TO THE TOP OF THE HILL, MAJOR.

I KNOW, RILEY, AND IT LOOKS TO ME AS IF THEY'VE MANNED THE SUMMIT FROM END TO END... WHICH MEANS OUR SUCCESS HERE WILL COUNT FOR NOTHING UNLESS WE CAN KICK THEM OFF THERE.



Massacre Mountain

A FURTHER ASSAULT WAS SWIFTLY MOUNTED. THERE WAS NO ALTERNATIVE TO A DIRECT FRONTAL APPROACH THIS TIME ...



THIS TIME, THE GERMANS WERE PRIMED TO DEAL WITH ANY FORM OF APPROACH -- MURDEROUSLY ...

... THREE
ROUNDS... RAPID...
FIRE!



THE SLOPE'S RIM WAS SPECKLED WITH VICIOUS JETS OF FLAME ~~~ FROM RIFLES, SCHMEISSERS, SPANDAUS. THE ENEMY VOLLEYS RIPPED INTO THE KIWIS CRUELLY...

FOR THOSE PERISHERS UP THERE IT'S EASIER THAN FLY-SWATTING! THEY CAN'T MISS!



IT WAS HARD-GOING ON THAT SLOPE, WITH BULLETS SNAPPING WICKEDLY AROUND THEIR EARS OR JARRING INTO THE BODIES OF FRIENDS AND COMRADES ALL AROUND THEM...

THIS IS SHEER SLAUGHTER! NONE OF US'LL LAST OUT TO THE CREST! HANG IT, IF I'M READY TO CHUCK AWAY MY OWN LIFE I'VE NO RIGHT TO SQUANDER THE LIVES OF MY MEN. I'M CALLING OFF THE ATTACK FOR THE TIME BEING...



Massacre Mountain

BILL BRADDOCK GAVE THE WORD TO FLATTEN OUT. UP ON THE RIM, KLAUSTEN FAIRLY YODELLED WITH EXULTATION...

THEY'RE GOING TO EARTH, HERR HAUPTMANN! THEY'VE BEEN STOPPED DEAD! SIEG HEIL, SIEG HEIL! UND HEIL HITLER!

YOU'RE A LITTLE PREMATURE WITH YOUR NAZI VICTORY-SHOUT. WE'VE DONE WELL, BUT WE'RE CONFOUNDEDLY THIN ON THE GROUND. UNLESS WE FIND SOME MEANS OF DISLODGING THOSE NEUSEELANDERS —



THAT WAS THE MOMENT WHEN A FLASH OF INSPIRATION BURST UPON HAUPTMANN MAX LANGSDORF...

THE COMPANY RADIO-MEN HAVE BEEN WIPED OUT. OTHERWISE WE MIGHT HAVE SIGNALLED BATTALION H.Q. FOR —

WAIT, KLAUSTEN, WAIT! I THINK I HAVE THE ANSWER...



HE WORKED OUT IN HIS MIND THE DETAILS OF THE IDEA THAT HAD OCCURRED TO HIM. PRESENTLY HE COMMUNICATED IT TO KLAUSTEN, WHO GREETED IT DELIGHTEDLY...

A BRILLIANT SCHEME, HERR HAUPTMANN! POSITIVELY BRILLIANT!

OBERLEUTNANT KLAUSTEN'S RIGHT. ACH, OUR COMPANY COMMANDER HAS A GOOD HEAD ON HIM, AND NO MISTAKE!



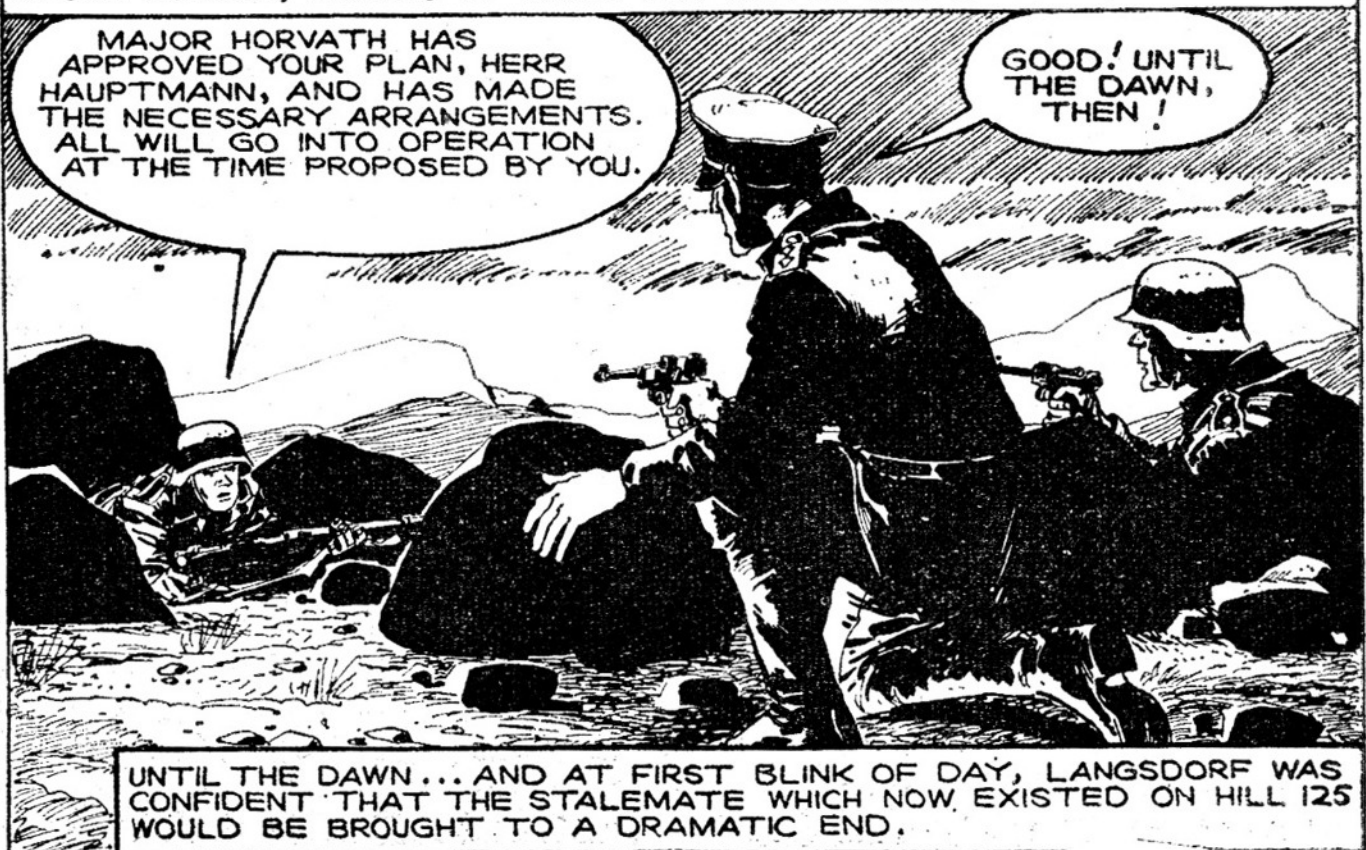
Massacre Mountain

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NOW THE GERMAN CAPTAIN SCRIBBLED A MESSAGE, AND SUMMONED ONE OF HIS SUBORDINATES TO ACT AS RUNNER ...



RIFLEMAN HARTENBERG VANISHED INTO THE NIGHT. HE REAPPEARED IN DUE COURSE, TOILING UP OVER THE NORTH SLOPE ...



Chapter 3. *Hour of Decision*

BUT DAWN WAS STILL QUITE A WAY OFF, AND BILL BRADDOCK WAS FIGURING OUT A STRATEGY HE INTENDED TO PUT INTO EFFECT BEFORE THE SKY LIGHTENED...

WE'RE SURE ENOUGH IN A FIX, MAJOR. AND OUR PROBLEM'S GOING TO GET WORSE WHEN THE DARKNESS BEGINS TO LIFT.

WELL, WE MUST DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT. IT'S GOING TO TAKE SOME PRETTY SLICK TEAM-WORK AND A LOT OF ORGANISING.



HE CALLED TO TOM BELL, AND THE BIG N.C.O. SQUIRMED OVER TO HIM...

SERGEANT, YOU REMEMBER THAT BATTLE-DRILL WE PRACTISED TO PERFECTION BEFORE ALAMEIN? THE UP-AND-DOWNER, WE NICKNAMED IT. NEVER HAD OCCASION TO USE IT AFTER ALL, BUT I FANCY THIS MIGHT BE A TIME.

I REMEMBER THAT CAPER, SIR. BUT IF YOU DON'T KEEP YOUR HEAD LOW, THERE WON'T BE NO UP-AND-DOWNER FOR YOU... ONLY A DOWNER!



SHOVE OFF AND LET YOUR SECTION-COMMANDER KNOW THE FORM. THEY JOINED US **AFTER** ALAMEIN. THEN PASS THE WORD TO MISTER DOLLAND OF EIGHTEEN PLATOON... AND NEVER MIND ABOUT MY HEAD, SERGEANT. TUCK YOUR TAIL IN!



FIFTEEN MINUTES WENT BY, PUNCTUATED BY INDIVIDUAL RIFLE-SHOTS. AT THE END OF THAT TIME, BRADDOCK WAS SATISFIED ALL HAD BEEN INFORMED OF HIS INTENTION ...

NUMBER ONE SECTION, SIXTEEN PLATOON! TEN-YARD SPURT! **NOW!**



KHAKI FIGURES LEAPED UP AND RACED THROUGH THE GLOOM ...

FAR ENOUGH! TEN YARDS... THAT'S ALL! **DOWN!**



Massacre Mountain

THE CREST WAS FLECKED WITH SQUIRTS OF FLAME AS MAUSER RIFLES THUMPED. SPANDAUS STUTTERED, LACING THE NIGHT WITH THREADS OF SILVER GERMAN TRACER ...

NUMBER ONE SECTION,
EIGHTEEN PLATOON!
ON YOUR MARKS
AWAY YOU GO!



SECTION BY SECTION THE KIWIS SPURTED FORWARD AS BRADDOCK CALLED THE TUNE ... TO THE CONFUSION OF THE GERMANS, WHO SWITCHED THEIR FIRE WILDLY AND BELATEDLY FROM GROUP TO GROUP.

IT'S WORKING A TREAT! AND D'YOU KNOW SOMETHING, MAJOR? I COULD ALMOST BELIEVE THE CHATTER OF THE JERRY MACHINE-GUNS UP THERE IS GETTING SORT OF HYSTERICAL!



THERE WERE CASUALTIES AMONG THE NEW ZEALANDERS, OF COURSE...



BUT PRECIOUS YARDS OF HILLSIDE WERE GAINED WITH MINIMUM LOSS...



Massacre Mountain

OFFICERS, SERGEANTS, MORTARMEN, SIGNALLERS, CLERK...
THEY WRENCHED THEMSELVES FROM THE FRIENDLY EARTH
AND SCRAMBLED UP THE SLOPE...

YOUNG MISTER DOLLAND'S
COPPED A PACKET! LOOKS
AS IF ONE OF THE JERRY
MACHINE-GUNNERS IS
GETTING THE HANG OF
THIS LARK!



THE MACHINE-GUNNER WHO HAD DROPPED
DOLLAND WAS RITTER. IT WAS TRUE,
INDEED, THAT HE WAS ADJUSTING
HIMSELF TO THE KIWIS' TACTICS...



Massacre Mountain

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UNLUCKILY FOR RITTER, BUZZ RILEY WAS LAYING HIS SIGHTS ON HIM ... AND BUZZ SELDOM MISSED.



AND SO, BY RINGING THE CHANGES AND FOXING THE ENEMY, THE NEW ZEALANDERS WORKED CLOSER ... AND CLOSER ... UNTIL THEY WERE WITHIN CLINCHING-DISTANCE OF VICTORY ...



Massacre Mountain

THE GERMANS TRIED TO BLAST THE ATTACKERS OFF THE HILLSIDE, BUT BEFORE THEY COULD CONCENTRATE THEIR FIRE, THE KIWIS WERE AMONG THEM...



UNDER MAX LANGSDORF'S LEADERSHIP, THE NAZIS FOUGHT LIKE DEMONS. NONE GAVE GROUND, SAVE FOR WOUNDED MEN SUCH AS RITTER...

NO RETREAT, COMRADES! HURL THEM BACK! DEUTSCHLAND ÜBER ALLES!

WE ARE LOST... I MUST GET AWAY...



FANATICAL FEROCITY WAS NOT ENOUGH TO TAKE THE SHOCK OUT OF THE ASSAULT. BILL BRADDOCK AND HIS KHAKI-CLAD WARRIORS WERE INVINCIBLE ...

SO YOU DON'T KNOW WHEN YOU'RE LICKED, FRITZ! ALL RIGHT, HERE'S WHERE I CLOUT SOME SENSE INTO YOU.



BILL BRADDOCK'S PISTOL-BUTT KNOCKED THE RESISTANCE OUT OF KLAUSTEN. A BULLET FROM MEADOWS' '38 DID MUCH THE SAME FOR LANGSDORF ...

ACH! I AM HIT! NOW I CAN SHOW NO MORE FIGHT THAN A LAME DUCK!



Massacre Mountain

THE STRUGGLE ENDED IN THE DESTRUCTION OF LANGSDORF'S COMPANY AS AN EFFECTIVE FORCE ...

MY NAME IS LANGSDORF... MY RANK---HAUPTMANN. THAT IS ALL THE INFORMATION I WILL GIVE... THAT, AND MY PERSONAL NUMBER ---

ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT. KEEP YOUR SHIRT ON.



LANGSDORF FELL SILENT, BUT ONCE HIS WOUND WAS DRESSED, HE EDGED NEARER TO KLAUSTEN AND SPOKE TO HIM FURTIVELY ...

THIS IS AWKWARD, KLAUSTEN. WE HAD INTENDED TO HOLD OUT A WHILE LONGER -- THEN MAKE A TEMPORARY WITHDRAWAL AND RE-OCCUPY THE RIDGE WHEN OUR OPPONENTS HAD BEEN OBLITERATED.



THE WOUNDED WERE GATHERED TOGETHER IRRESPECTIVE OF NATIONALITY. IT WAS WHEN THEY HAD BEEN COLLECTED AND GIVEN FIRST AID THAT A BLOOD-CURDLING WAIL AROSE FROM BELOW THE CREST...



FROM THE RIM OF THE HILL THEY SAW A FIGURE SPRAWLED ON THE BROKEN GROUND .



Massacre Mountain

THE FIGURE OF A MAN WHO HAD CRAWLED AS FAR AS HE COULD AND THEN COLLAPSED. IT WAS RITTER ... HALF-CRAZED, BUT NOT BY SUFFERING ALONE ... BY HORROR AS WELL ...



THE WOUNDED MACHINE-GUNNER BEGAN TO RAVE IN A VOICE THAT CLIMBED TO A HIGH PITCH. LANGSDORF AND KLAUSTEN HEARD, AND LOOKED AT EACH OTHER TENSELY ...



RITTER, WHO HAD FAINTED, WAS BROUGHT BACK TO THE HILLTOP BY BUZZ RILEY.

ALL RIGHT, BOYS, START DIGGING-IN ALONG THE CREST.

EVIDENTLY THEY DID NOT UNDERSTAND!



ENTRENCHING TOOLS BIT INTO THE DIRT. THE TASK OF SCOOPING OUT SHELTERS WAS WELL UNDER WAY WHEN BILL BRADDOCK APPROACHED MAX LANGSDORF AND KLAUSTEN...

RILEY, AS SOON AS YOU'VE FINISHED LOOKING AFTER THAT MAN, I WANT YOU TO ESCORT THESE TWO GERMAN OFFICERS TO BATTALION H.Q.

THIS NEUSEELANDER MAJOR AND HIS MEN HAVE BEHAVED WELL... IN EVERY SENSE.



Massacre Mountain

LANGSDORF WAS THINKING NOW OF THE ATTENTION THE KIWIS HAD GIVEN TO THE CASUALTIES AMONG HIS OWN MEN. HE WAS THINKING, TOO, OF THOSE CASUALTIES' FUTURE WELFARE.

WHAT ABOUT MY WOUNDED COMRADES, HERR MAJOR? SURELY THEY ARE TO BE EVACUATED, TOO?

LIKE MY OWN WOUNDED, THEY'LL HAVE TO WAIT TILL RED CROSS STRETCHER-BEARERS SHOW UP. I CAN'T SPARE FIGHTING TROOPS TO CARRY THEM TO THE REAR AT PRESENT.



BILL BRADDOCK EYED THE HAUPTMANN APPRECIATIVELY, APPROVING HIS OBVIOUS CONCERN FOR THE SURVIVORS OF HIS DEFEATED FORCE...

I UNDERSTAND YOUR FEELINGS. YOUR ARTILLERY'S BOUND TO STRAFE THIS HILL SOON. I'LL DO ALL I CAN TO PROTECT YOUR WOUNDED AS WELL AS MY OWN CASUALTIES.



LANGSDORF SWALLOWED. HE SEEMED CURIOUSLY ON EDGE...

HERR MAJOR, I WISH TO REMAIN WITH MY MEN UNTIL THE RED CROSS PERSONNEL ARRIVE —

NOT A CHANCE, HAUPTMANN. AS OFFICERS, YOU AND THE OBERLEUTNANT ARE PRISONERS OF SOME IMPORTANCE. I MUST SEND YOU TO THE REAR WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY.



BUZZ RILEY HAD RISEN FROM THE PRONE FORM OF RITTER. HE STEPPED TOWARDS LANGSDORF AND KLAUSTEN ...

THAT'S IT, RILEY. MARCH 'EM AWAY.

YES, SIR... OKAY, YOU TWO GENTS, GET MOVING.



THEY STARTED DOWN THE SOUTH SLOPE -- KLAUSTEN, LANGSDORF, AND THEIR KIWI GUARD. LANGSDORF LOOKED BACK, HAGGARDLY.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT YOUR BLOKES UP THERE, MATE. FIRST CHANCE HE GETS, THE MAJOR'LL PROBABLY HAVE ALL THE WOUNDED SHIFTED BACK A BIT.



Massacre Mountain

EVEN NOW, THERE WAS THE FIRST FAINT HINT OF A GLEAM IN THE EASTERN SKY... LANGSDORF SUPPRESSED A SHIVER AND SPOKE IN A HUSKY TONE.



YES, YOUR MAJOR IS A HUMANE AND CONSIDERATE MAN. THAT WAS PLAIN TO SEE...

HE WAS INTERRUPTED BY KLAUSTEN. THE OBERLEUTNANT SWITCHED A SLY, SIDELONG GLANCE ON HIM AND MUTTERED A FEW WORDS IN GERMAN...



NOT LONG TO WAIT NOW, HERR HAUPTMANN, EH? A QUARTER-OF-AN-HOUR, PERHAPS? HALF-AN-HOUR AT THE MOST?

ANGER BUBBLED IN LANGSDORF AS HE DETECTED THE EXPECTANT GRIN ON THE FACE OF HIS SECOND-IN-COMMAND...



WHAT KIND OF GERMAN ARE YOU? HAVE YOU NO THOUGHT FOR THOSE COMRADES OF OURS WHOSE LIVES WILL BE EXTINGUISHED AS WELL?

WHY SHOULD I THINK OF THEM? IT IS ENOUGH FOR ME TO KNOW I WAS PREPARED TO DIE WITH THEM, AS A TRUE NAZI. BUT SINCE I DO NOT HAVE TO, I AM WELL CONTENT.

MANY TIMES THE HAUPTMANN HAD BEEN SICKENED BY THE CYNICAL OUTLOOK OF MEN WHOSE BETTER INSTINCTS HAD BEEN SUBMERGED BY THE HITLER CREED.



LANGSDORF WAS THINKING ONLY OF THE HELPLESS GERMAN WOUNDED. AT LEAST, SO HE TOLD HIMSELF. YET, MAYBE DEEP INSIDE HIM, HE WAS THINKING OF THE KIWIS, TOO. WHO KNOWS?



Massacre Mountain

THE HAUPTMANN TORE LOOSE FROM KLAUSTEN, WHIPPED PAST THEIR KIWI ESCORT BACK UP THE HILL. BUZZ GAPED, UNCOMPREHENDINGLY...



IT WAS AT THIS MOMENT
THAT KLAUSTEN SNATCHED
THE NEW ZEALANDER'S
RIFLE FROM HIM. WHEELING,
BUZZ GRABBED AT IT TO
RETRIEVE IT...



BUZZ RILEY JERKED CONVULSIVELY TO THE POINT-BLANK STRIKE OF A BULLET. AS HE SLUMPED DOWN WITHOUT A SOUND, A SECOND SHOT SLAMMED OUT... AND THIS TIME THE TARGET WAS HAUPTMANN LANGSDORF!



A CHORUS OF SHOUTS AROSE FROM THE CREST OF THE HILL. SERGEANT BELL'S SHOCKED YELL SURMOUNTED THE COMMOTION...

STONE ME!
ONE OF THOSE
JERRY OFFICERS
HAS GOT BUZZ
RILEY!



Massacre Mountain

A VENGEFUL CURSE ON HIS LIPS, TOM BELL SWUNG INTO THE AIR -- SQUEEZED THE TRIGGER. KLAUSTEN WENT OVER LIKE A SKITTLE IN A BOWLING-ALLEY. HE WAS DEAD BEFORE HE HIT THE GROUND ...



BILL BRADDOCK BLUNDERED DOWN FROM THE CREST WITH TOM BELL CLOSE BEHIND HIM ...

CAVES...NORTH SLOPE... MANY, MANY MINES IN THEM...ENOUGH TO COVER THIS WHOLE HILL ... AND HUNDREDS OF MORTAR-BOMBS. AT DAWN, WHEN THERE IS ENOUGH LIGHT, OUR ARTILLERY WILL PINPOINT THEM. THE MOUNTAIN TOP... IT WILL GO UP LIKE A VOLCANO ...



NIGHT WAS VISIBLY RETREATING NOW. BRADDOCK HAD PRECIOUS LITTLE TIME TO PROFIT BY WHAT A DYING MAN HAD TOLD HIM. HE DARE NOT WASTE AN INSTANT...

EVERYBODY OFF THAT CREST!
BRING THE WOUNDED WITH YOU! GET TO THE FOOT OF THE SOUTH SLOPE **FAST AS YOU CAN!**



DON'T MIND ME, SARGE... NO NEED... I'M DONE FOR...



DON'T TALK THAT WAY, RILEY...

THE RETIREMENT WAS COMPLETED, AND NONE TOO SOON. IT WAS BROAD DAYLIGHT AS SERGEANT BELL LAID BUZZ RILEY GENTLY DOWN ON THE LOWER SLOPES OF HILL 125.

DONE FOR, SARGE, I TELL YOU. CAN'T THINK HOW YOU'LL GET ALONG... WITHOUT ME. NOBODY TO BAWL OUT... BUT YOU'RE NOT A BAD BLOKE, YOU OLD CURMUDGEON...

RILEY....
BUZZ



TO THE NORTH, GUNS BOOMED. SHELLS SCREAMED TOWARDS MONTE OZARIA. THEY EXPLODED -- AND TRIGGERED-OFF A THUNDERING SEQUENCE OF MASSIVE ERUPTIONS...



DEBRIS RAINED DOWN. IT HAD HARDLY STOPPED FALLING WHEN KIWIS WERE SCUTTLEING UP THE SOUTH SLOPE TO LAY CLAIM TO THE CRATERED DESOLATION OF THE SUMMIT...



IT WAS HARD FOR SOME OF THE KIWIS TO CREDIT, BUT AS THEY LOOKED BACK THEY COULD SEE TOM BELL'S SHOULDERS WERE JERKING SPASMODICALLY, LIKE THOSE OF A MAN GRIEF-STRICKEN...



Massacre Mountain

HILL 125 STAYED IN THE NEW ZEALANDERS' HANDS. NEVER AGAIN WAS IT ENEMY-HELD TERRITORY. BUT TEN YEARS AFTER THE WAR, ON A TRIP TO EUROPE, EX-SERGEANT TOM BELL MET A GERMAN THERE BY CHANCE

ME, I LEARN ENGLISH IN
BRITISH PRISONER-OF-WAR
CAMP. MY NAME IS HANS RITTER.
NOW I COME AS TOURIST FROM
BERLIN TO RE-VISIT THIS AREA.
I LOST GOOD FRIENDS AND
COMRADES HERE.

ME, TOO, JERRY...
ME, TOO ...

AS IN A DREAM, TOM BELL SAW
THE FULL MUSTER OF THE 'DON'
COMPANY HE HAD KNOWN. 'OLD
COMRADES' ... STEPPING OUT TO
THE REGIMENTAL MARCH LIKE
MEN TEN FEET TALL.

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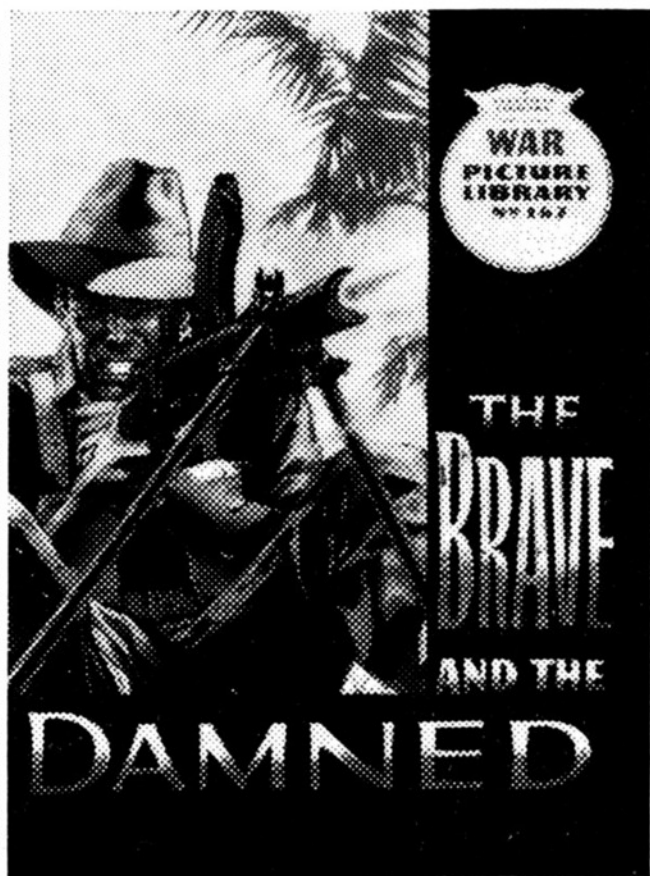
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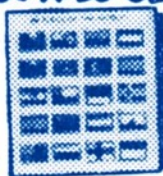
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